

course you could follow  
would you descend into  
of lower walks of life?  
would you tread the dusty  
road of dishonor? Would  
you the grope in the dark  
recesses of ignorance,  
or in of yet filthier  
haunts of Vice? I declare  
to God my dear I care not  
much which direction you  
prefer so that you do  
but preserve your truth  
purity & virtue & with  
these I had rather have  
you of most worth of  
human beings than the  
most profane learned  
& ingenious without  
them. I have always  
thought that in I hate  
of something you would  
rather these comparisons  
of hand & if you ~~base~~ <sup>base</sup> ~~not~~  
met with them I ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> ~~not~~  
you prefer my fortune  
to mine I tell you  
long to my dear father & mother

My Dear John My Father's letter to me  
25 Mar. 1854 J.P.C.  
It appears to me material that you should not  
on so advantageous an opportunity neglect to remove some  
of the difficulties which must <sup>be</sup> unavoidable, under the ig-  
norance of your instructor, in y<sup>e</sup> comprehension of y<sup>e</sup>  
Greek Poet, & therefore in furtherance of what I  
hinted of moment I left you I will notice some things  
I know, & some of which I am ignorant on that subject.  
I am anxious that you should rightly appreciate  
the value of Greek Learning, because I believe y<sup>e</sup> language  
is of most complete, harmonious, expressive, & beautiful  
that ever engaged y<sup>e</sup> wonderful organ of human speech.  
& that the best means to improve y<sup>e</sup> English tongue,  
& of other barbarous dialects of y<sup>e</sup> North, is <sup>to</sup> understand  
correctly & apply faithfully, y<sup>e</sup> energy, grace & variety  
of y<sup>e</sup> former. Ovid (I think you) had in view y<sup>e</sup>  
dantes of y<sup>e</sup> bar, but not (I hope like you) he  
abandoned his professional studies for y<sup>e</sup> metric art  
as he exulting or complaining, I do not know which,  
thus exposes himself "Et quod sent ab am scribere  
veritas erat"

His subsequent history will be a lesson to you  
not to fall into y<sup>e</sup> same error, & perhaps of most successful  
expedient to avoid it, is to learn y<sup>e</sup> right nature &  
soft character of poetry, & of exquisite delicacy &  
gigantic ~~force~~ mental strength necessary to its

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attainment.

The first time my mind was at all directed to  
of principles on which of beauty of Greek poetry depended  
was on a perusal of some letters from an Athenian student  
[Mr Fox] & then I began to discern the insufficiency of  
ordinary forms of education, to impart this knowledge  
or rather of taste on which it depends. I have since  
read a work which has confirmed that opinion.  
There are 4 distinct matters, all of which at school  
are ~~confused~~ <sup>however</sup> confounded together; on which of harmony  
of ~~the~~ composition prosaic or metrical depends -  
1 Accent ( $\varphi$  θυ γος) 2 Quantity ( $\chi$  ρ ο υ ς) 3 Articulation  
(σ υ λ λ α β η) 4 Emphasis (called by Scaliger obscurely enough  
Afflatus in Latin) - The three first are more  
tastefully denominated by Dion<sup>ysius</sup> Hal<sup>icarnassensis</sup> μέτρος, ῥυθμός,  
ᾠκεία. I have only room to speak now of the two former.  
In your Etym. Grammar Accent is marked I believe (1) acute  
(2) grave (3) circumflex - The two first denote elevation  
(1) depression (2) of last (3) is continuity without  
rise or fall in the second. It will appear extraordinary  
to you that to the present day of accent which only indi-  
cates of variations in of gamut, or of high & low, should  
be mistaken for quantity or elongation & abbreviation  
of sound: yet they are as distinct as height & ~~breadth~~  
~~breadth~~ - In modern languages the former is determined  
with sufficient precision, because they are spoken; for  
living languages; in of ancient, it is uncertain because  
they are not spoken (or dead languages) On the contrary  
of quantity is preserved in of ancient & neglected in  
of modern tongues, for by accent we in a great degree  
supply the want of measure, & measure is all we can  
retain of ancient poetry as to of music of its numbers -  
Had not of Greek & Latin languages been of most perfect  
in ~~the~~ measure, or quantity, by necessarily losing of  
accentuation we should have been deprived of all ~~the~~ <sup>some of</sup>  
harmonies: the regions of thought, of embellishments of



Description would have survived, but of lovely attire  
on which all these are arrayed would have been  
stripped off — After all, with our knowledge of  
quantity, we are very deficient. It is a tolerably  
decent rule that long syllables occupy twice of time  
of short, but how different are long to long & short  
to short, as to each other *odos, podos, Tpotos, spoqos*,  
gradually increase in length, & yet are all short.

It is a general rule in Latin & Gr that a syllable which  
has two consonants following is long; but how difficult  
must it be for a Frenchman to accommodate his  
feeling to this law, for with him "Le redoublement  
de la consonne (as he calls it) presque toujours  
arresté que la syllabe est breve; and with us  
of like whenever of same consonants unite as  
bonny funny, or even where of accentuation so  
round of such a duplication, as in calamity &  
Ask Mr & among other things what he takes  
been of sound of of *Notie Disammas*? The great  
of the Northern languages as of brevity with which  
pronounce our vowels (It is therefore I believe in the  
best dialects of German, is it not?) the French  
pronounced their vowels much broader than we do  
or it should seem even of Latins

"Gravis ingenium, Gravis dedit ore rotundo  
musa Regi" (Hor)

The Italian & yet more of Spanish have this advantage  
in an eminent degree — Milton when in Italy  
projecting probably that immortal poem which is of  
greatest ornament of our language felt of disadvantages  
to which our vowel clipping orthoepy would expose  
him, & he complains of of *Os clausum* of his countrymen  
"They are says he somewhere) cautious of opening their  
mouths lest they should catch cold". I think of a passage  
occurs in that most admirable little tract on Education.

It is obvious to my mind that both accent & quantity  
variation of ~~note~~ <sup>tone</sup> & variation of continuance are ~~both~~  
founded on of structure of human organs & must  
have ~~been~~ <sup>been</sup> applied to every language on of face of the



earth; & if musical part of poetry in every language  
depends upon it felicity with which these are managed  
for production of harmony; & for this purpose in  
our own language we must inquire if we also have  
spondees, pyrrhics, choriambs &c. & what is the  
criterion by which in English we are to distinguish  
if pyrrhic from a spondee & if triachys from  
an iambus. But whether we can transfer these

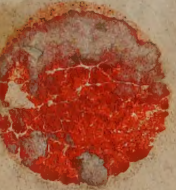
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Mr. J. P. Collier

at New Rich Godley

St. John College  
Windsor

Letter from my Father  
Dec 26 1787



to our own barbarous diction or not if pleasures of  
attic harmony can never be enjoyed without a tolera-  
ble acquaintance with these & it highly gratifies me  
that you have not only now but on any future  
occasion if possibility of satisfying your doubts on  
subjects ~~then~~ with which I am so imperfectly acquain-  
ted or rather on which I am in total darkness.  
I am my dear highly pleased with your letter; &  
with of general spirit it indicates. I have  
never my dear represented the steep ascent of  
literature as <sup>an</sup> easy path; if pure stream you  
partake of, if pure air you inhale, if  
fragrant odours you enjoy, if delicious fruits  
you taste in your progress are reward which  
if you know how to value you will obtain.  
But supposing my dear you knew none of the  
ways which lead to this sacred temple. Is there any